



NEWSLETTER

Somerset Northern Bypass

Department of Highways
District 8
P.O. Box 780 / Somerset, Kentucky / 42502
Telephone 606/677-4017

No. 1, November 2001

KYTC to Hold Public Information Meeting on Potential Bypass

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) will hold a public information meeting to discuss a proposed northern bypass of Somerset on November 27, 2001 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Center for Rural Development, 2292 South Highway 27, in Somerset.



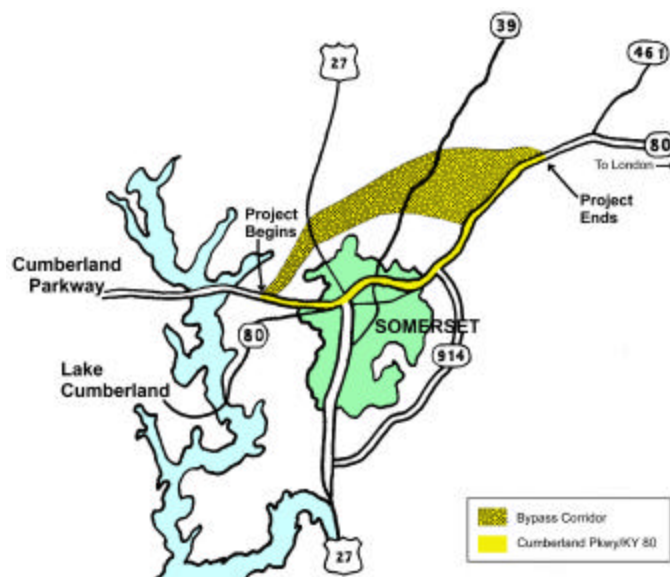
The proposed project is a new four-lane, fully access-controlled facility*, eight to ten miles in length, that extends from the Louis B. Nunn (Cumberland) Parkway west of Somerset to KY 80 east of Somerset, bypassing the city on the north. Other alternatives considered will be (a) upgrading existing Cumberland Parkway/KY 80 through Somerset to a fully-access controlled facility and (b) the No-Action (no-build) alternative*.

The project is intended to improve connectivity to other major roadways, accessibility to community facilities and services, and overall traffic flow in the Somerset area; to accommodate increasing through traffic and truck volumes and improve traffic safety by providing a fully access-controlled facility; to

provide system continuity for the interstate system (I-66) if developed; and to fulfill the legislative mandate set forth in Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (See Project History on page 2).

This first public meeting will be held in an open-house format. Citizens can come at any time between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. and view handout materials, an audio-visual presentation introducing the project and its public involvement program, and then view maps of the project area showing general design proposals and environmental issues identified to date. Staff from the KYTC and its consultants will be on hand to answer questions.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide general information about the proposed project and to hear public concerns, comments and questions. Citizens also can submit written questions and comments to the KYTC about the proposed project. Information provided by the public will be used along with the results of ongoing engineering and environmental studies to develop project alternatives. These alternatives will be presented for public review and comment at the next public information meeting tentatively scheduled for next summer.



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* See Commonly Used Transportation Terms on page 3.

Project History

The history of this project can be traced back to the concept of the East-West Transamerica Corridor, also known as I-66. Originally this highway was to run from coast-to-coast, starting in Virginia and ending in Southern California. In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) identified high priority corridors on the National Highway System. The East-West corridor was identified as one of these high priority corridors.

As a result of the ISTEA legislation, a national East-West corridor feasibility study was conducted. The study concluded that the entire coast-to-coast corridor did not meet the economic feasibility criteria established for the study. However, it also was determined that further analysis could find some corridor segments to be feasible from a state or regional perspective.

In 1997, the University of Kentucky Transportation Center conducted a study for the KYTC that concluded that the Southern Kentucky Corridor of I-66 was feasible. This study identified the Somerset to London segment as a priority segment. Based on the results of this study, funding for the continued development of the Somerset to London corridor was established through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

TEA-21 identified Somerset to London as a high priority corridor within the feasible portions of I-66. A planning study comparing a number of alternate corridors between Somerset and London was completed in June 2000. As a result of this planning study, a northern corridor was selected for continued development. This corridor was then separated into two projects: the northern bypass of Somerset (this project) and the remainder of the corridor east to London.

The Somerset Northern Bypass and its alternatives are being evaluated as an independent project. The intent is that the project be developed in such a way that it will function effectively, whether or not I-66 is ever developed in

this area. However, it must be designed to meet interstate standards so that it can become a part of I-66 if and when that facility is constructed.

Public Involvement Program and Citizen Advisory Council

Public involvement is a key component in the development of this project. As part of the public involvement program, the KYTC will be providing information and soliciting public comment on the project alternatives over the next two years. This will be accomplished by:

- ✓ periodically publishing this project newsletter,
- ✓ preparing press releases for the news media,
- ✓ creating an information repository at the KYTC District 8 headquarters in Somerset,
- ✓ disseminating fact sheets and handouts on an as-needed basis,
- ✓ holding public information meetings and a final public hearing to exchange information with the general public, and
- ✓ helping establish and facilitating an active citizen's advisory council.

A major initiative to better involve the community in the development of this project is the citizen's advisory council. The council will consist of a group of individuals who will represent those citizens affected by or otherwise interested in this project. Issue areas likely to be represented on the council include: agriculture, economic development/tourism, environment, government, and neighborhoods.

The council's job will be to assess detailed information presented by the KYTC and its consultants, to voice the ideas and concerns of members of the community, and to make formal recommendations to the KYTC regarding project alternatives.

If you would like to recommend someone to be on or work with the advisory council, please complete the enclosed insert (mailer) and submit to Cathi Blair at the KYTC. The address is listed on the mailer.

Steps in Highway Project Development

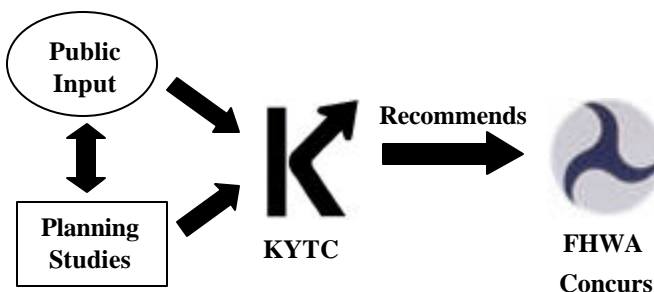
Getting to the construction of a major new highway project is a three-phase process that can extend over a prolonged period of time. The three phases are: (1) preliminary engineering and environmental analysis, (2) design and land acquisition, and (3) construction. The following outlines the key components of each phase.

Phase I – Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis

During Phase I, preliminary engineering and environmental studies* are undertaken, a public involvement program is implemented, and an Environmental Impact Statement* is prepared. (This is the phase we currently are in on the Somerset Northern Bypass project.)

After all the studies have been completed and the KYTC and the public have examined the impacts of the proposed project, a recommendation will be made by the KYTC to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on what alternative should be implemented.

During the life of this project study, the KYTC will hold at least three meetings to obtain public input. The advisory council also will hold several meetings, the first of which is tentatively scheduled for early December 2001. A second Public Information Meeting is scheduled for late next summer to present project alternatives to the public. The Public Hearing (the final public meeting on the project) is presently scheduled for early summer 2003. At the Public Hearing, the KYTC will present the preferred alternative.



Phase II – Design and Land Acquisition

If a build alternate* is recommended by the KYTC and approved by the FHWA, the KYTC will then develop detailed plans and specifications for the project. Determining the required utility adjustments also is a part of this work. After the physical limits of construction have been determined, the KYTC will work to acquire the right-of-way needed to construct the proposed facility.

Phase III – Construction

After the development of the construction plans and specifications and the necessary right-of-way along the project corridor has been acquired, construction can begin once the necessary funds are made available.

Commonly Used Transportation Terms

Provided below are some commonly used transportation terms that will help clarify some discussions in this newsletter and at public meetings.

Intersection – the point at which two (or more) different roadways meet at the same elevation, or “at grade”. Intersections are often controlled with stop signs or traffic signals.

Interchange – a type of construction that allows the crossing of two or more roadways using overpasses and underpasses, removing the potential conflict of intersecting traffic. The roadways are connected by on and off ramps.

Full access control – restriction on traffic such that entry to a four-lane roadway is limited to interchanges with on and off ramps.

Partial access control – control of traffic such that entry to a four-lane roadway is partially restricted. Access to the roadway may be provided by a limited number of widely spaced intersections and, in some special locations, by interchanges with on and off ramps.

Build Alternate – under the build alternative, one of the build options, i.e. a northern bypass or an upgrade of existing Cumberland Parkway/KY 80, would be pursued.

* See Commonly Used Transportation Terms.

No-Action (no-build) Alternative – under the no-action alternative, a proposed bypass would not be built and the existing Cumberland Parkway/KY 80 would not be upgraded. Only routine maintenance and repairs of the existing roadway would take place.

Preliminary Engineering Studies – are technical studies of the engineering aspects of Phase I work. The purpose of the studies is to determine where the project will be located and what it will look like, including the general geometric design and access control. The results of these studies are the basis for the preparation of construction plans.

Environmental studies – are technical studies of environmental issues and resources such as air quality, archeology, ecological resources, hazardous materials, historical resources, noise, and socio-economics. While these studies are used as support for the Environmental Impact Statement, they usually are quite technical and therefore not written for the general public. However, the results of the environmental studies will be presented to the advisory council for use in their deliberations.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – a document required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when a federally-funded or permitted project would have a significant impact on the natural and/or human environment. It is an integrating document that describes the environmental effects identified in the technical studies and analyses and by the public. The EIS is to be written so that it can be understood by the general public.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) - is an early version of the EIS circulated to agencies and the public for comment. The DEIS, a major focus of the final public hearing, identifies the feasible alternatives studied and the impacts of each. It also will identify the preferred alternative.

Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – is the final version of the EIS that incorporates agency and public comments.

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NEWSLETTER

Somerset Northern Bypass

No. 1, April 2002

Advisory Council Members

Agriculture

- ❖ Kenny Beshears
- ❖ Allen Crawford
- ❖ Keenan Turner

Business

- ❖ Ken Bean
- ❖ Jim Bentley
- ❖ John Tuttle

Economic Development/Tourism

- ❖ Carrol Estes
- ❖ Diane Holman
- ❖ Vacancy

Environment

- ❖ Dan Crockett
- ❖ Lee Florea
- ❖ Father Jack Kieffer
- ❖ Ben Mattingly

Government

- ❖ Wayne Bennett
- ❖ Darrell Beshears
- ❖ J.P. Wiles

Neighborhoods

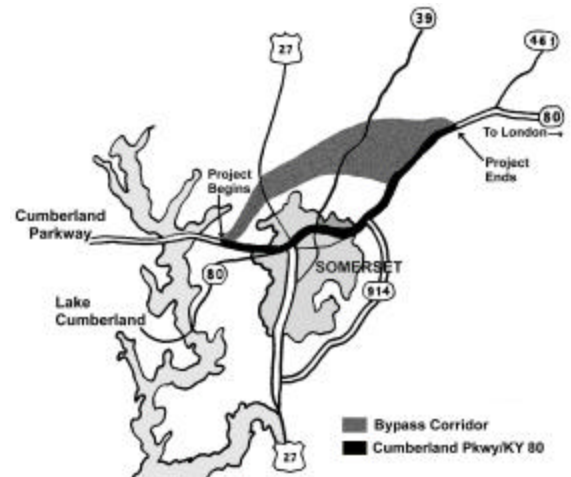
- ❖ Carrie Altmaier
- ❖ Steve Dunn
- ❖ Reverend Mark Harrell

Citizen's Advisory Council Formed

The Somerset Northern Bypass Citizen Advisory Council is a group of community residents who have volunteered to assist the Kentucky

Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) in a study of a proposed highway bypass north of Somerset.

Alternatives to the bypass, including the "No-Build" alternative and upgrading Cumberland Parkway/KY 80 through Somerset to an interstate-type facility, also will be considered.



Throughout the project study, one of the primary

roles of Council members is to foster communication between the public and the KYTC on the purpose of and need for the project and on the alternate alignments being studied and their impacts.

"The KYTC is committed to hearing from the public about this project," said David Beattie, project manager. "We want to establish a two-way flow of dialogue between the public and our agency. The Advisory Council can make that happen."

Each Advisory Council member represents an interest area in the community, including agriculture, business, economic development/tourism, environment, government and neighborhoods. Each member is a focal point for the community to obtain information about the study and to provide input on their concerns about highway alternatives.

"However, the public needs to remember that Council members are not responsible for developing or promoting any of the alternates," Beattie said. "Their roles are as objective facilitators to foster public involvement around gauging the impacts of each alternative and determining which might best serve the community as a whole."

One of the first tasks of the Council is to help the public set criteria for determining impacts. "This is being done now," Beattie said, "by having Council members in each interest area conduct a mail survey of their constituents."

(continued on page 2)

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After their final criteria are developed, the Council will use the criteria and the results of the KYTC's engineering design and environmental studies to determine which alternates might have the most impact on farming operations or be most disruptive to neighborhoods, for example. "We will then ask the Council for guidance on how to minimize those impacts," Beattie said.

Ultimately, the Council will make recommendations to the KYTC, based on their dialogue with the public and their own analysis and discussions, about how each alternative would impact the community.

"It is important for the public to remember that while each Council member represents a particular interest area, the Council as a whole may need to make trade-offs in attempting to build a consensus for the community about if and where a new highway should be constructed. All interest areas are important in forming a well-considered recommendation," Beattie said.

"The Advisory Council's recommendation may take several forms, depending on what members feel most comfortable with and what best represents public opinion," Beattie said. "They may or may not agree on a single best alternative." There may be majority and minority opinions expressed on alternate locations. Or, Council members may decide to simply compile a list of impacts for each alternate. "Whatever form their recommendations take, we will integrate into our decision-making process. We very much appreciate the participation of these dedicated and generous volunteers," Beattie said.

The KYTC will make the final choice of which alternative to recommend to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). If the KYTC recommends one of the build alternates, and if the FHWA agrees with the KYTC's recommendation, design and land acquisition activities would begin, once funding is secured.

Get to Know the Advisory Council

Provided below are short biographies of the Advisory Council members, listed within the group they represent.

Agriculture Work Group

Ken Beshears

Occupation: Farmer

Ken has been active as a farmer for 28 years. He lives within and leases land along the proposed bypass corridor.

Allen J. Crawford

Occupation: Farmer/Insurance Agent

Allen was born and raised in Pulaski County and has been involved in farming for as long as he can remember. He and his family own four farms where they have raised beef cattle and tobacco for over 40 years.

Keenan Turner

Occupation: Agricultural Extension Agent

Keenan has served as an agricultural extension agent for Pulaski County for 24 years. His intent is to make sure that the producers in the project corridor have a voice in this project.

Business Work Group

Ken Bean

Occupation: Vice-President, Cumberland Division of Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, former Executive Director, Somerset/Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce

Ken has lived and worked in Somerset for 37 years. He has worked in the business community for the last 17 years.

Jim Bentley

Occupation: Certified Public Accountant

Jim has lived and worked as a CPA in Pulaski County for 19 years. He has been associated with various local businesses both as an advisor and as an owner. The future growth of the county is very important to him.

John Tuttle

Occupation: Owner of Several Small Businesses

John's 24 years in the Pulaski County business community includes industrial and service sector experience. He is a former board member of the

Somerset Chamber of Commerce and currently serves as a board member of the First Southern National Bank and the Industrial Foundation Board.

Economic Development/Tourism Work Group

Carrol Estes

Occupation: Executive Director, Industrial Foundation Board

Carrol has worked in community and industrial development for 18 years and also has been involved in planning efforts for the City of Somerset for 18 years.

Diane Smith Holman

Occupation: Executive Director, Somerset-Pulaski Convention & Visitors Bureau

Diane has worked nearly 15 years in travel and tourism at the state and county levels. She feels that having a good highway system is important to the area since the Lake Cumberland area is one of the largest tourism attractions in the eastern U.S.

Environment Work Group

Dan Crockett

Occupation: Forester

Dan has worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 24 years. He has experience in resource management, including timber and wildlife management and environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Lee Florea

Occupation: Karst Hydrogeologist

Lee, originally from Somerset, has 11 years experience in karst hydrogeology. He currently is the president of the Kentucky Speleological Survey and the principle investigator for the I-66 special project of the National Speleological Society. He has been able to provide useful information about caves and hydrogeology in the project corridor.

Father Jack Kieffer

Occupation: Pastor & Technical Consultant

In his work for the group Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest (ASPI), Father Kieffer tries to help people learn to live in harmony with the environment in a sustainable way by providing technical and

scientific information on how to live simply and through their own efforts.

Ben Mattingly

Occupation: Retired Fishing Guide

Ben has lived in Somerset for 63 years. He has been an outdoorsman all his life and has spent the last 22 years making a living as a guide. He feels it is his duty to represent the vital environmental issues that are involved in road-building and the resulting population gains.

Government Work Group

Wayne Bennett

Occupation: Transportation Director, Pulaski County Schools

Wayne grew up in London. He served 20 years in the U.S. Air Force as a navigator before retiring. Since retiring from the Air Force, he has spent 10 years as a bus driver and driver trainer for Pulaski County Schools. He is very familiar with the roads and traffic in the county and the effects that has on school buses and travel times as well as accessibility.

Darrell Beshears

Occupation: Pulaski County Judge Executive

Judge Beshears has served as County Judge for 12 years. During that time he has seen the county experience extreme growth, increased tourism and industrial development as well as an increase in the number of people retiring to the area. The Judge sees transportation as the number one problem for the area.

J.P. Wiles

Occupation: Mayor, City of Somerset

J.P. has served as the Mayor of Somerset since 1999. Before becoming Mayor, he was a representative of Commonwealth Insurance.

Neighborhoods Work Group

Carrie Altmaier

Occupation: Preschool Teacher/Parent Educator

Carrie has lived in her home, located in the middle of the proposed bypass corridor, for 18 years. She knows the people living in her area and feels that it is helpful that they know they have a voice in the development of this project.

Steve Dunn

Occupation: Director of Pupil Personnel, McCreary County Board of Education

Steve has lived in the Pleasant Hill Community for the past 14 years. His wife's family has lived there for several generations. He hopes to help identify the best route possible for the people living in the area.

Reverend Mark Harrell

Occupation: Pastor

As a pastor, Reverend Harrell feels he is aware of the importance of people's homes, environment and lifestyles, while at the same time recognizing the need for advancing development. He thinks the Somerset community is wonderful area in which to live and wishes to see it grow and develop, while protecting existing features.

KYTC to hold Public Information Meeting on May 14th

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) will hold an open-house public information meeting on the proposed northern bypass of Somerset on May 14, 2002 at the Center for Rural Development, 2292 South Highway 27, in Somerset. Citizens can come at any time between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. and view handout materials, an audio-visual presentation and

maps of the project area. Staff from the KYTC and its consultants will be on hand to answer questions.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide information on the purpose and need for this project, to present preliminary alignments currently under study and to present preliminary environmental study information about the project area.

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NEWSLETTER

Somerset Northern Bypass

No. 3, September 2002

Advisory Council Mission

"The Somerset Northern Bypass Citizen Advisory Council will make recommendations to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) concerning the location, effects, and mitigation of a proposed northern bypass of Somerset and its attendant alternatives. The Council will develop criteria to evaluate project alternatives, and submit their findings and recommendations in a report to the KYTC."

Advisory Council Members

Agriculture

- ❖ Allen Crawford
- ❖ Keenan Turner

Business

- ❖ Ken Bean
- ❖ Jim Bentley
- ❖ John Tuttle

Economic Development/Tourism

- ❖ Carrol Estes
- ❖ John Perkins

Environment

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- ❖ Father Jack Kieffer
- ❖ Ben Mattingly

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- ❖ Wayne Bennett
- ❖ Darrell Beshears
- ❖ J.P. Wiles

Neighborhoods

- ❖ Carrie Altmaier
- ❖ Steve Dunn
- ❖ Reverend Mark Harrell

Citizen Advisory Council Recommends North Alternate

A large majority of the Somerset Northern Bypass Citizen Advisory Council's 17 members are recommending that the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) build the North Alternate as a northern bypass of the city to alleviate traffic congestion and provide adequate space for future residential and business expansion as the local population grows, according to Chairman Ken Bean.

The KYTC considered four build options in its recent project studies:

- the North Alternate
- the South Alternate
- the Crossover Alternate
- an upgrade of existing KY 80

The No-Build Alternative was considered as well.

The KY 80 Upgrade Alternate was dismissed from further consideration when KYTC found that it would not provide an adequate level of service for future traffic operations or relieve traffic congestion along KY 80 and other connecting streets in Somerset.

Over the past several months the KYTC and the Citizen Advisory Council have sought input on the impacts of the remaining bypass alternates from the agriculture community, business and economic development/tourism sectors, government officials, environmental experts and neighborhood residents.

"We got tremendous response from the community that favored the North Alternate," Bean said. *(continued on page 2)*

Advisory Council To Present Report To KYTC At Public Meeting

The Somerset Northern Bypass Citizen Advisory Council will meet on Thursday, October 17 at 6:30 p.m. at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset to present its final report to the KYTC. Council members will be recognized by KYTC for their dedication to community involvement for transportation planning. The public is invited to attend and ask questions.

Citizen Advisory Council Recommends North Alternate (continued from page 1)

“Technical study data also verified that the North Alternate had fewer impacts on homeowners and more opportunity for future industrial development. Council members interfaced with numerous individuals from each sector of the community.”

“The North Alternate will minimize disruption to the community and provide the most space for sustainable, planned growth and quality of life needs,” he added. The KYTC also conducted surveys at Public Information Meetings throughout the study to gauge public opinion on the alternates. In August, 508 out of about 531 respondents said they prefer the North Alternate.

KYTC’s socio-economic studies showed that the most residences would be taken by the South and Crossover Alternates, and that the North Alternate would afford the greatest economic development and business/industrial growth opportunities. There were no threatened or endangered species found anywhere in the project area.

However, Council member and caves specialist Lee Florea said that of the remaining build alternates he preferred the Crossover Alternate as “the best balance” between the disruption of neighborhoods and the taking of agricultural land and the loss of open space. He and some of the other Environment Work Group representatives still prefer the KY 80 Upgrade Alternate or the No-Build Alternative.

“The North Alternate could have structural problems that will increase construction cost and degrade the previously less impacted areas,” he added. One other environmental representative on the Council preferred the South Alternate, and two preferred the North Alternate.

Father Jack Kiefer added that while the North Alternate would allow for more development, including that of unnecessary malls, it also would allow for more parks and green spaces which he feels are needed in Somerset. In his opinion, all run-off from the chosen alternate should be directed to wetlands that can clean contaminated run-off before

it enters creeks and sinkholes which eventually reaches Lake Cumberland, the water supply for Somerset and five other communities.

Council member Keenan Turner, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension, said that while the North Alternate takes the most farmland, the local agriculture community will adapt to the loss of agricultural acreage due, in part, to a recent shift away from tobacco production and other components of the traditional agricultural economy in south central Kentucky.

Council members agreed that special care should be taken to protect farmland, the natural environment and the scenic quality of the land and to minimize noise, light and open space impacts. They are developing suggestions for mitigation measures to address such impacts. They also think the KYTC should continue to work with local citizens throughout the design and construction stages of the project to assure that community needs are met.

Some Council members like Steve Dunn, who will lose his home if the North Alternate is built, and Allen Crawford, who will lose portions of his family’s farm, said sacrifices have to be made for the good of the community. “My heart wasn’t with the North Alternate for my own selfish reasons, but the northern route is best for the community,” Crawford said.

Dunn, who lives in Pleasant Hill, said both the North and Crossover Alternates would take his house. “But I’m not bigger than Pulaski County. My heart is with the people. The North Alternate is best for the community.”

Council members suggested that local government officials provide guidance on how to assure planned and sustainable growth for the community in the future. Mayor J.P. Wiles and County Judge Executive Darrell Beshears said many local residents told them they want the North Alternate. Beshears said, “I don’t know if we’ll grow out to the North Alternate, but we must base our decisions on what our history of growth has shown us.”



“Our studies of the design and impacts of each alternate and the will of the community point to construction of the North Alternate for a safe highway that will serve increasing traffic levels in the

The KYTC considered four Build options in its project studies, the North Alternate, the Crossover Alternate, the South Alternate and an upgrade of existing KY 80, as well as the No-Build Alternative. The KY 80 Upgrade Alternate was dismissed from consideration when KYTC found that it would not provide an adequate level of service for future traffic operations or relieve traffic congestion along KY 80 and other connecting streets in Somerset. *(continued on page 4)*

Beattie pointed out that the preferred alternate designation does not mean the study is over or that a final decision has been made. Ongoing engineering and environmental studies and reports must be completed and approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) before the construction of any alternate can go forward.

“However,” Beattie added, “knowing which alternate is preferred allows the KYTC to expedite some of the more detailed studies that would not be done on all

the alternates because such studies are time-consuming and expensive.

For example, Beattie anticipates that more detailed archaeological studies and soil and rock borings will begin in the near future along the North Alternate. “I expect the drill rigs will start their work in the area of the North Alternate’s proposed interchange with the relocation of US Route 27,” he added. “In that way the geotechnical work for the two projects can be coordinated.”